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Behold

This is a pre print version of the following article:

Original Citation:

Availability:

This version is available <http://hdl.handle.net/2318/1633574> since 2017-11-22T10:38:30Z

Publisher:

Minnesota University Press

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(Article begins on next page)

VEER ECOLOGY



VEER ECOLOGY



A COMPANION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL THINKING

JEFFREY JEROME COHEN AND
LOWELL DUCKERT, *editors*

Foreword by Cheryll Glotfelty
Afterword by Nicholas Royle



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS
MINNEAPOLIS • LONDON

Poetry in “Obsolesce” was previously published as Brenda Hillman, “Phone Booth,” in *Practical Water* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2009), 17. Copyright 2011 by Brenda Hillman. Reprinted with permission of Wesleyan University Press. Poetry in “Sediment” was previously published as Mark Nowak, “Procedure,” in *Coal Mountain Elementary* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2009), 150. Copyright Mark Nowak, 2009; and as Rita Wong, from *undercurrent*, blewointment, 2015. Copyright Rita Wong 2015. Poetry in chapter 14 was previously published as Norman Jordan, “A Go Green Flash Dream,” in *Where Do People in Dreams Come From? And Other Poems* (Ansted, W.V.: Museum Press, 2009). Reprinted with permission. Poetry in chapter 15 was previously published as Edward Thomas, “Rain,” in *Collected Poems* (Highgreen: Bloodaxe Books, 2011).

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Published by the University of Minnesota Press
111 Third Avenue South, Suite 290
Minneapolis, MN 55401-2520
<http://www.upress.umn.edu>

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

The University of Minnesota is an equal-opportunity educator and employer.

22 21 20 19 18 17 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Behold

SERENELLA IOVINO

Behold moves us out from where we stand. Closed in the solitude of self-contemplation, the I is thumped by a call—*behold*—that smashes its self-sufficient silence, a silence that concentrates all presence in the close proximity of the present or in the apparent distance of things. *Behold* forces us to look elsewhere—or just to swerve our mind beyond what seemed familiar, and conceals instead landscapes unseen. Because *behold* is a call that draws the eye/I to something that has always already been there—unheeded, undetected, or unrecognized—or to something that there will be, in a time that will come, and, once it will be here, it will be impossible for us to disregard. Many things and beings inhabit these landscapes: nonhuman natures, marginal persons, gulfs of injustice, impure inhuman lives, beauty, the future, the earth, darkness, the countless hyperobjects that mark, as some say, the end of the world. Or, what might be the greatest hyperobject of all—God.

As I think of *behold*, my veering verb in this collective passage across the natures of nature that this book attempts, echoes of the ways we humans have been summoned by the call of the divine come to my literary memory. Because—even if God, to my earthly ears, more often speaks with the endless speeches of this planet where we live and have our being—*behold* traditionally carries in itself that very voice. It is the voice of something both present and unattainable, the voice of all the invisible mundane enmeshments and—at the same time—of the world's distance from itself. And so, two routes open in front of me. One is the route of immanence—the route of a here-and-now full with hidden but luminous

further dimensions. The other is the route of transcendence—the route to an elsewhere that might enlighten or blind you, depending on which side you stand on while you gaze at it. Both routes carry you away from where you are, and both carry you back to where you were. But, in doing so, they both trigger a swirl: because, if you really *behold* what these routes hint at, *you* will be the one who change. *You* will be veered. Because *behold* calls you to veer from the used paths. Because *behold* is a veering call.

First Route: Beholding Immanence

Rio de Janeiro, 1963

set in same
size as main
text

There is a cockroach crawling out the closet. You slam the door. She is smashed. She is dying. Behold. Her eyes are open. These eyes are watching you. They want you to behold this crushed body. You see, you witness. This crushed body is there, her eyes are asking you to taste her moistness and fullness and otherness. This crushed body—her eyes wet and open—is a face. The face of the radically other. The face of the one being that is all beings. You see, you witness, you behold. This crushed body it is you, too. This seeing body you now behold is the face of god.

The Passion according to G.H., by Clarice Lispector, is a book that, once it enters your life, there it will stay. Buried as it might seem, it periodically reemerges, carrying with itself the “difficult pleasure” that, as its author understood, was yet a pleasure. Clarice was well aware of this complexity as, addressing the novel’s “Potential Readers,” she pointed out that she “would be happy if it were read only by people whose outlook is fully formed. People who know that an approach—to anything whatsoever—must . . . traverse even the very opposite of what is being approached” (v).¹ People, in other words, able to see—and veer. Forming one’s *outlook*—like forming one’s soul—is indeed challenging.² It means to be able to look outside yourself and give a frame to what you see. It means to be virtually ready to organize your experience in relation to your (inner) I/eye, while at the same time being ready to forget all this and “traverse” from the self to its very opposite. And so, you really need to be fully prepared when you face a story where the inside and the outside of your I/eye *impurely* merge into one another—a story that says: “What I have seen is unorganizable” (60).

with God.”³ Through the character of G.H.—whose initials might be an abbreviation of the Portuguese *gênero humano*, “humankind”—she completely shuttered the standpoints of anthropocentric discourse, inviting readers to *behold* what is beyond and beneath the disenchantment of the nonhuman and the humanization of God. She knew what this was all about. Born in Ukraine in 1920, her family emigrated to Brazil when she was two months old. As her biographer reminds us, she “emerged from the world of the Eastern European Jews,” a vanishing society whose stubborn mysticism and religiousness she brought “into a new world, a world in which God was dead.”⁴ In this world, loaded with the inquietudes of two continents and her personal history of loss, violence, and staggering talent, the beautiful Clarice was to become not only a national monument but also the catalyzer of a worldwide attention for her capacity to reshape the language, categories, and style of South American literature. Topics such as maternity (an ancestral, prelinguistic, and *material* motherhood), the ontological revelation of sameness-in-difference, the unremitting observation of the personal and apersonal embodiments of life, have contributed to fasten her bond with feminist thinkers and with philosophy in general.⁵ Underlying all these themes is Clarice’s tendency to swerve the gaze from an alleged human superiority, and to restore the connection—almost an eye contact—with a matter/God that permeates all forms of being.

Incubating all this, *The Passion* is a long monologue in which G.H., a bourgeois and wealthy professional from Rio de Janeiro, tells the story of how—faced with a dying cockroach—she “converted” to the understanding “that the world is not human, and that we are not human” (61). As in all mystical tales, the plot, evoked in my “lyrical” epigraph, is minimal—and yet abyssal. Alone in her penthouse, G.H. is tidying up a room previously occupied by her servant. In the closet of this unadorned and almost empty space, she discovers a cockroach and, after observing it for a while, crushes it. By beholding the insect’s smashed body, she realizes that the cockroach itself (or better, *herself*: G.H. views it as a female and an Ur-mother) is life in its primary, “impure” form. And this impure matter—a “prehuman divine life” (93–94) that *looks back* through this broken body—is God. In the final scene, G.H.’s pantheist *passion* is completed as she eats the matter coming out from the roach’s body, here again in a ritual of inherent mutuality: “Then, through the door of

synthesis

condemnation, I ate life and was eaten by life. I understood that my kingdom is of this world" (112). The traditional order of transcendence is thus reversed in a revelation of pure immanence, and the dualism of matter and spirit is rejected for a mystical Spinozism: an ecological vision of the divine based on the intimate, bodily, and prelogical reciprocity of being in which "everything looks at everything, everything experiences the other" (58).

In this unexpected ontological trial, seeing and beholding play the major role. Their meaning, however, is not limited to the visual dimension: overcoming the realm of reason, they monistically condense all the experiences occurring to G.H. as the narrating fragment of a vast body-mind continuum. It is by beholding this "crude, raw glory of nature" (58) that G.H. progressively overturns the organized discipline of the ego, opening the cataracts for a mystical seeing in which everything is "traversed" and becomes its other. G.H. in fact "becomes (with) what she sees": "The desire for intimacy is the desire to surrender to immanence, to experience continuity with the world, the desire to become-animal, to become-flesh. It is through vision that G.H. surrenders . . . and empties herself from humanity."⁶ In an impure narrative-ontological swirl, the Jew Clarice Lispector revives the passage of the Exodus (a word that means "a way out") implying that the face of the divine cannot be beheld and survived (Exodus 33:20). By beholding the face of God—a God that is here and now—G.H. takes her "way out," veering away from her human self and relinquishing to the world. And so, emptied of her humanity, she can eventually find herself "face-to-face with the dusty being that was looking back" (49) at her. In its immediate, intimate manifestation, the roach's body indeed *is* a face, a "shapeless face" (47) that touches and beckons from the immemorial neutrality of being. Emmanuel Levinas has famously suggested that the other's face—*le visage d'autrui*—carries an endless appellation to recognize the Other in its naked, "absolute exposure."⁷ In *The Passion* the *visage* addressing us—a neutral, inexpressive, but at the same time naked and absolutely exposed face—is plunged even deeper in the ontological abyss of copresence. The kind of reciprocity that emerges in this revelation of mutual belonging and unfathomability, in fact, is not accidental but primordial; it is rooted in the womb of matter, *mater materia*. In this ur-material dimension, existence is the transitive proximity of all beings that *are* as they *see* each other:

The cockroach . . . was looking at me. I don't know if it saw me. . . . But if its eyes didn't see me, its existence existed me: in the primary world that I had entered, beings exist other beings as a way of seeing one another. . . . The cockroach saw me not with its eyes but with its body. (68)

This bodily distributed seeing is a “chiasm,” an “intertwining,” as Maurice Merleau-Ponty would say. If we abandon the human-centered categories structured around the divide of a seeing I/eye and a visible other, we reach a dimension where “there is a reversibility of the seeing and the visible,”⁸ a deep and carnal intermingling that marks each being as “enmeshed within the visible present and [as] both seeing and seen, touching and touched by the world and the things around us.”⁹ This dimension is inhabited by things that see, by worlds that behold each other as their way of existing. This side—the Greeks imagined—is the realm where nature/*physis* shines in the plenitude of light/*phōs*, and all creation is nothing else but a seeing, a seeing that pierces the darkness and emerges in all appearing things. Here *phainesthai* is the law of being, and coming into light—alighting in this world—does not simply happen *in front of* the subject but *along with* it.¹⁰ In this dimension, lateral to the order of reason, G.H. sees, beholds, and is one with everything: empires’ cycles, pyramids surging and decaying in the appearing desert, turns of elements and extinct species, glaciers arising and melting, proteins and protozoa, voices of hieroglyphs and magmatic darkness—all this she witnesses and beholds through the roach’s body, feeling the horror of knowing that her organized self depends on the very disorder of being, spiraled with time. Stability in fact is only an illusion, whereas reality is everything which veers and returns our gaze—it is the roach’s cilia, it is moistness and nausea, an inferno of matter, madness—it is raw life. But at the same time, G.H.’s experience is also the poetic translation of another vision: that all life is a dynamic unfurling of forms, a blind, unrelenting movement that, over eons, continues to evoke kinships. Because, in Lynn Margulis’s words, “all beings alive today are equally evolved. All have survived over three thousand million years of evolution from common bacterial ancestors. There are no ‘higher’ beings, no ‘lower animals,’ no angels and no gods.”¹¹

If one can behold all this, then one is ready to understand that the “deepest life identity” of the human is not simply intertwined with the

nonhuman but is one with the *in-human*, this “estranged interiority” that forces the I to change sides and accept the “discomfort of unfamiliar intimacy” with the Other.¹² This “unfamiliar intimacy” is—biologically as well as ontologically—the cypher of the human itself:

I had looked upon the live cockroach and had discovered in it my deepest life identity. . . . Listen, in the presence of the living cockroach, the worst discovery was that the world is not human, and that we are not human. . . . The inhuman is our better part, is the thing, the thing part of people. (49–50, 61)

The “thing part” inhabiting the human—be it the blindness of evolution, the magmatic Ur-mother of forms and bodies, or “God-matter” (61)—at once levels and disorganizes everything, undermining all articulation, including understanding and language: “The world interdependent with me [and] never again shall I understand what I say. . . . Life is itself for me, and I don’t understand what I am saying. And, therefore, I adore.” (173). “I adore”: which means, standing in awe, I behold. Because beholding is an experience that leaves you at a loss for words—it leaves language itself at a loss for words. Here all the intellectual counterforts built to ensure our essential “purity” by seceding the human from all the rest are nothing else but a way to contain our contact with matter—a matter stigmatized as “impure” only because it takes us back to our original chaos. In G.H.’s story this very chaos is redeemed by redeeming matter itself and by beholding in the roach’s body the divine who dwells in the copresence of things: a “dynamically unfolding process of open-ended interactivity”¹³ that is the *creation* of God-matter. This explains why such words as *hope* or *forgiving* sound meaningless now: if matter is *already* a manifestation of God, it is not necessary to imagine an elsewhere in which the present will be redeemed: “The present is God’s today face. The horror is that we know that it is right in life that we see God. It is with our eyes truly open that we see God” (141).

If salvation has to be sought, it is not “from matter but within it, within our delicate, difficult interactivities.”¹⁴ In the immanent body of being, God is there, in the open, looking back to us with all H* ever-evolving creaturely eyes.

Second Route: Transcend, Behold

Auschwitz, 1943–44:

Delete
colon

From the point of view . . . of substances that you could steal with profit, that laboratory was virgin territory. . . . There was gasoline and alcohol, banal and inconvenient loot: . . . the offer was high and also the risk, since liquids require receptacles. This is the great problem of packaging, which every . . . chemist knows: and it was well known to God Almighty, who solved it brilliantly . . . with cellular membranes, eggshells, the multiple peel of oranges, and our own skins, because after all we too are liquids. Now, at that time, there did not exist polyethylene, which would have suited me perfectly since it is flexible, light, and splendidly impermeable: but it is also a bit too incorruptible, and not by chance God Almighty himself, although he is a master of polymerization, abstained from patenting it: He does not like incorruptible things.¹⁵

All those who know Primo Levi know that the author of *If This Is a Man* was a chemist. Familiar with the elements' "lyrical drift and continuous conjoining," in a beautiful book titled *The Periodic Table* (1975) he followed them in their "stormy cultural and material intermixes,"¹⁶ letting them speak and act along with the events and using their laws and swirls to shed some light onto one of the darkest times of European history. In the tale "Cerium," Levi contrasted the way humans manipulate chemicals and the way God—traditionally, more farsighted—does. The image of "God Almighty" as a "master of polymerization" facing the unwanted consequences of polyethylene resonates deeply with our discourse on *behold*. We can picture this God as a chemist who observes all substances through a microscope, while at the same time beholding their effects in the vast, macroscopic horizon of creation. Provident by definition, this Ultimate Senior Chemist—Levi pinpoints—does not simply abstain from *creating* polyethylene, but from *patenting* it: S/He leaves to humans the *choice* (and *responsibility*) to do so, just as S/He leaves to them the choice (and responsibility) to do all the rest.

As this scene of a divine scientist in a lab suggests, the movement inbuilt in the gaze of Levi's God is *transcendent*: by considering new elements, God beholds beyond singularities and individuals, surmounting (*id est*, trans-scending) the here-and-now from a higher point that "bear[s]

vision of things to come over the terrestrial yonder.”¹⁷ But the gaze of ecology is also transcendent: it is so certainly not because it calls us to behold an alleged metaphysical truth beyond the deceptiveness of phenomena but because it regards the more-than-human world by *hovering over* its systemic fabric of causes and effects. Surpassing the horizon of the present and of unconnected presences, the “transcendent” dimension of ecology is indeed entrenched in the time-space-matter field in which we are all entangled, whether we grasp it or not. This entanglement transcends singularities, it transcends the punctual being of things, and creates flows of excess—it overflows, transcending the landscapes that might be contained by our gaze. This ecological transcendence is to us another veering call; it too says: *behold*. And maybe also Levi’s Almighty God, master of polymerization, wants to tell us this: *behold*, you—you all, and you humans with your patented creations—are in and of this excess. Behold this unfurling view that “grounds human beings within the continuum of life, and . . . situates the history of their embodied skills within the unfolding of that continuum.”¹⁸ But in order to understand the becoming of this excess within the continuum of life, we need another way of seeing things, we need a *prospect*, a dynamic “consideration of something in the future to be gained from viewing it, and the action of facing it.”¹⁹ This *prospect* is the standpoint of a moral imagination that would allow us to envisage the scope of our actions, as they are combined with the agency of beings, things, and elements. The new materialisms and the ethical vistas that this movement has opened have said much about these themes. But the path we are moving along now takes another tour, leading us back to the roots of environmental ethics.

Here we encounter a philosopher named Hans Jonas. A Jew like Levi and Lisspector, in the 1970s Jonas helped veer our ethical gaze away from the here-and-now and from the enclosures of human-centeredness. Like the title of his famous book, his “imperative of responsibility” is a call to *behold* both the future of our actions and the life of the ontologically Other, thus transcending the categories of traditional ethical discourse.²⁰ The difference here is simple: in their classical formulations, ethics of virtue or of duty, for example, invite us to mold our acts upon the insight of a superior principle, not to *behold* the world in which these acts are to be performed. And these acts are by definition ethically synchronic and species-specific: accomplished by *human* subjects, they *immediately*

reflect on the subject itself. Jonas's responsibility ethics, instead, asks us to act by observing the upshots of our acts from a vaster—more-than-human and transtemporal—perspective. This ethical shift is understandable if one considers that its historical context is the one in which the whole world is irrevocably called to behold the systemic facets—at once social, political, and bio-geo-chemical—of the ecological crisis. To a philosophical debate struggling to envision new moral horizons, Jonas bequeathed the idea of a “commanding solidarity with the rest of the animate world” (138–39) and of a “*real* future as an open-ended dimension of our responsibility” (12). To his eyes, the triumph of *technē* and of human destructive power over the biosphere “reveal” (138), like in a mystical disclosure, the link between the “critical vulnerability” (6) of natural systems and the necessity of new extended duties:

That which had always been the most elementary of the givens . . .—that there are [humans], that there is life, that there is a world for both—this suddenly stands forth, as if lit up by lightning, in its stark peril through human deed. In this very light this responsibility appears. (138–39)

Unlike those who maintained the impossibility—both ethical and juridical—of a moral imperative to safeguard natural balances in the face of future generations, for Jonas such an imperative is instead a real obligation and does not require reciprocity. If *behold* is a veering call, to behold the future of our interconnected being-there is a blind *behold*—a *behold* based not on an act of faith in the future but on acting so as to let the future be. In the perspective of responsibility, the future of humankind and that of nonhuman nature converge in one single gaze.

Although it would be improper to describe Jonas as an advocate of radical anti-anthropocentrism, reading *The Imperative of Responsibility* we see that the compass of his ethics becomes gradually broader. As if *in crescendo* his vision is progressively veered, *anthropodiscentered*. Moving beyond the instrumentalism embedded in traditional humanism, he explicitly speaks of “nature's own dignity” (137). The human/nonhuman juxtaposition is therefore transcended: seen in this light, the nonhuman is a mirror through which the human might discover and behold its most authentic face, Jonas maintains. The instrumental destruction of “the rest of nature,” in fact, can only produce “the dehumanization of [the

human], the atrophy of [its] essence even in the lucky case of biological survival” (136): recognizing the dignity of nonhuman natures is not only the condition of our own existence but a path toward a richer humanization of the human itself. This idea of ontological porosity and ethical mirroring reappears in the way Jonas considers our exploitation of the earth and the living. With his gaze turned toward monocultures and industrial farming, almost echoing Levi, Jonas asks if this allegedly “humanized nature” is still nature. And his response is unambiguous:

The ultimate degradation of feeling organisms, eager to live and endowed with sensibility and capability to move, deprived of their habitats, imprisoned for all of their life, . . . transformed into egg- and meat-producing machines, does not have anything in common with nature.²¹

As this quote suggests, Jonas’s philosophy, including his environmental ethics, is a way to *see through holocausts*. It is hence unsurprising that as his gaze, a few years after *The Imperative of Responsibility*, veers from ethics to theology, the Holocaust is the setting of this veering. As Levi also knew, in fact, beholding the inhumane necessarily implies a reflection on God—not only on God’s existence but also on God’s nature. This question is the subject of *The Concept of God after Auschwitz*, a lecture held by Jonas in 1984, whose argument is at once simple and vertiginous.²² After Auschwitz, he maintains, everything has to be reviewed because Auschwitz calls us to *behold*: to behold the human world as well as the divine. In particular, Auschwitz has shown that the three attributes that Jewish theology assigned to God—“absolute goodness, absolute power, and intelligibility” (9)—are no longer compossible, they do not hold together anymore. It is then necessary to sacrifice one of them, and Jonas’s choice falls on omnipotence:

The *Deus absconditus*, the hidden God . . . is a profoundly un-Jewish conception. Our teaching, the Torah, rests on the premise and insists that we can understand God, not completely, to be sure, but something of him—of his will, intentions, and even nature—because he has told us. . . . But he would have to be precisely [unintelligible] if together with being good he were conceived as all powerful. After Auschwitz, we can assert with greater force than ever before that an omnipotent deity would have to be either

not good or . . . totally unintelligible. But if God is to be intelligible in some manner and to some extent (and to this we must hold), then his goodness must be compatible with the existence of evil, and this it is only if he is not *all* powerful. Only then can we uphold that he is intelligible and good, and there is yet evil in the world. (9–10)

Auschwitz—and all the other Auschwitzes of history (for both humans and nonhumans)—expose the existence of a “divine fate bound up with the coming-to-be of a world” (12). Following Gershom Scholem, Jonas goes back to a very influential Kabbalistic doctrine, formulated in the sixteenth century by the mystic Isaac Luria. According to Luria’s theory of *Tzimtzum* (self-limitation, contraction) in the moment of creation God withdraws from the world:

To make room for the world, the *En-Sof*. . . had to contract himself so that, vacated by him, empty space could expand outside of him. . . . Without this retreat into himself, there could be no “other” outside God, and only his continued holding-himself-in preserves the finite things from losing their separate being again into the divine “all in all.” (12)

Being at once infinitely absent and yet categorically existent, God compresses H*self in order to allow a magnified expression of the world. From the outside of this absolute transcendence, God beholds the world, letting the world free to behold God. The freedom of this mutual beholding comes at the price of God’s omnipotence over the creation: “Creation was that act of absolute sovereignty with which it consented, for the sake of self-determined finitude, to be absolute no more—an act, therefore, of divine self-restriction” (11). This has an important consequence: “Having given himself whole to the becoming world, God has no more to give: it is [hu]man’s now to give to him” (12). From ethics to theology and then back to ethics: an ethics of responsibility based on the absolute transcendence of a God that beholds us from the external edge of creation, leaving us free—and bonded—to move within the finitude of these limits. This is God, the “master of polymerization” who does not patent polyethylene. Indeed, only a horizon defined by an act of “divine self-restriction” can enable an ethics of human responsibility—one calling us to *behold* creation and *hold* to its fragility.

At the end of his lecture, Jonas declares that we have to contend with “Auschwitz rather than the earthquake of Lisbon”—namely, with “deliberate evil rather than the inflictions of blind, natural causality” (11). But here is the point: if the earthquake that smashed Western Europe in 1755 was the outcome of “*blind*, natural causality,” then the causality that triggers catastrophes that interlock human fate with the fate of nonhuman natures is not *blind*—or ought not to be.²³ Still, in an epoch that we call “Anthropocene” the challenge is just this: how to see the innumerable entanglements of human causality and natural agencies, how to hold and *behold* them in space, time, and matter. This *visualizing* challenge is one with the call to embrace the future in our ethical prospect, also because we need a farseeing moral imagination to face the almost undetectable forms of “slow violence” coming from pollutions and contaminations, the hidden aggression that “occurs gradually and *out of sight*,” whose repercussions are played out “across a range of temporal scales” and through geographies that gradually become interconnected.²⁴ This *transcending* violence requires a different ontology, an ontology that outdoes individuals and enables us to *behold* the world from another perspective: not that of its future, but that of its end. Indeed, as Tim Morton notably insinuates, the world’s end—the end of the way we are used to beholding our world—is already here, already now. And this apocalypse—this *revelation*—is the Anthropocene. In our postgeological age, objects finally reveal themselves for what they are: not things individualized in the here-and-now but processes and substances spread in quagmires of space-time-matter that merge with our existences: *hyperobjects*. How otherwise could one picture “things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans” such as the biosphere, global warming, “the sum total of all the nuclear materials on Earth,” or simply a polystyrene cup?²⁵ Hyperobjects reside in this permanent interference across individuals; they are not punctual but radial and viscous. Not only, then, do they falsify “the idea that time and space are empty containers that entities sit in”²⁶ but, as *blind* outcomes of human causality, they are directly responsible for the end of the world—of the world in which we used to see space and time as linearly interrelated. They—really—are “unorganizable.”

In this world of hyperobjects, in which our moral imagination is challenged by the impotence of God and the vulnerability of creation, we have to start seeing our life as a hyperobject itself. *We* are ourselves a

wider being—a “we” that is immanent in the human and yet transcends it: *we* are “life looking back,” Clarice would say. It is across and within the body of this huge hyperobject that the slow violence of irresponsible practices takes place. Because, in the *Tzimtzum*-world, “both creation and destruction are always on the horizon.”²⁷

So, at the end of all these stories—of roaches and chemistry, of human freedom and divine restraint—what is the lesson? Maybe this one: that we need to swerve our gaze and respond to the world’s calling faces, even if this means the risk to lose (or loosen) our human uniqueness. And we need a mystical stance to let things and beings reveal themselves to us. Away from the solitude of the I/eye and from the abstraction of isolated singularities, *behold* is an invitation to reenchant the world by holding together the entangled, luminous fragility of all beings. Hyperobjects, slow violence, and all the invisible bonds that make us one with everything in space and in time, coiling together immanence and transcendence as in a Möbius strip, forcing us to veer from our usual paths to embrace the swirling pace of our worldly sacredness: this is what we must behold. So, *behold* this veering world, now. Yes, *behold*: this—is—a—veering—call.

Notes

1. Clarice Lispector, *The Passion according to G.H.*, trans. Ronald W. Sousa (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). Further citations of this work appear parenthetically in the text.

2. The original Portuguese text reads “pessoas de alma já formada.” See Clarice Lispector, *A Paixão Segundo G.H.* (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco Digital, 2009), Kindle edition. I do, however, endorse Ronald W. Sousa’s translation of *alma* with “outlook,” a choice which mirrors the idea—clearly expressed in this novel—that to possess a “fully formed soul” means to be able to see (and frame things) in unpredictable ways.

3. Benjamin Moser, *Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 261–62.

4. *Ibid.*, 5.

5. Particularly important here are Hélène Cixous’s contributions, especially *Reading with Clarice Lispector* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1990) and *L’heure de Clarice Lispector* (Paris: Editions des Femmes, 1989).

6. Chrysanti Nigianni, “The Taste of the Living,” in *The Animal Catalyst: Towards Ahuman Theory*, ed. Patricia MacCormac (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 123.

7. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994), 90.

8. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," in *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, ed. Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 406, 412.

9. Louise Westling, *The Logos of the Living World: Merleau-Ponty, Animals, and Language* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 33.

10. There is an etymological connection between the root of the words *physis* (nature, generation), *phos* (light), and *phainesthai*, *phainomena* (appear, appearances). This connection continues with the terms related to the semantic sphere of knowing/thinking. *Idea*, for example, comes from the root (*v*)*id*-, which is common to the verb *orao/eidon* and to the Latin *video*, "see." Like all nature is light, all knowing is seeing.

11. Lynn Margulis, *Symbiotic Planet: A New Look at Evolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 3.

12. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2014), 10, 24.

13. Kate Rigby, "Spirits That Matter: Pathways Toward a Rematerialization of Religion and Spirituality," in *Material Ecocriticism*, ed. Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 288.

14. Catherine Keller, *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 173.

15. Primo Levi, *The Periodic Table*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 143–44.

16. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert, "Introduction: Eleven Principles of the Elements," in *Elemental Ecocriticism*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 11, 10.

17. Lowell Duckert, "Earth's Prospect," in Cohen and Duckert, *Elemental Ecocriticism*, 240.

18. Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge, and Description* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 49–50.

19. Duckert, "Earth's Prospect," 241.

20. Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985). Further citations of this work appear parenthetically in the text.

21. This crucial passage belongs to a paragraph titled *Die humanisierte Natur* (Humanized nature), which was omitted from the abridged English translation. My translation is based on the original German edition. Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 372.

22. Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice," *Journal of Religion*, 67, no. 1 (1987): 1–13. Further citations of this work appear parenthetically in the text.

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23. Kate Rigby's *Dancing with Disaster: Environmental Histories, Narratives, and Ethics for Perilous Times* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015) is here a mandatory reference.

24. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 1, emphasis added.

25. Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 1.

26. Ibid., 65.

27. Duckert, "Earth's Prospect," 260.

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